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## European Union

## Fishery Products

## European tuna sector asks for protection on tariffs 2003

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**Report Highlights:**

The European tuna industry is deeply concerned with the EU's decision to open a tariff quota for canned tuna.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Brussels USEU [BE2]  
[E2]

## The European tuna sector asks for protection on tariffs

### Tariff quota for EU imports of canned tuna

In November 2001, the EU, Thailand and the Philippines agreed to hold consultations to examine to what extent the implementation of a preferential tariff treatment for canned tuna originating in the ACP states was harming the Thai and Philippine interests. While imports of canned tuna from the ACP states enjoyed duty free access, Thailand and the Philippines were both subject to a duty of 24%. Following the failure to achieve a mutually acceptable solution the EU, Thailand and the Philippines agreed to refer the matter to mediation, a dispute settlement procedure under the auspices of the WTO. In December 2002, the WTO Mediator issued an opinion advising the EU to open a tariff quota of 25,000 MT for 2003 at an in-quota tariff of 12% ad valorem.

Council Regulation 975/2003 opens a quota for imports of canned tuna covered by CN (Combined Nomenclature) codes 1604 14 11, 1604 14 18 and 1604 20 70. The tariff quota is opened for an initial period of five years. The volume is fixed for the first two years: 25,000 MT from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 and 25,750 MT from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005. The tariff quota will be divided into four parts: 52% of the annual volume for imports originating in Thailand, 36% of the annual volume for imports originating in the Philippines, 11% of the annual volume for imports from Indonesia and 1% of the annual volume for imports from other third countries.

The regulation can be downloaded from the Internet at [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/dat/2003/l\\_141/l\\_14120030607en00010002.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/dat/2003/l_141/l_14120030607en00010002.pdf)

### Fisheries Committee Meeting

On June 11, 2003, the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament held a meeting on the current situation and perspectives of the European tuna industry. Several representatives from the sector, including producers and processors were invited to exchange views with Members of Parliament and the Commission. The objective of the meeting was to assess the current stock situation of tuna species and to look for a better management system for sustainable tuna fisheries. The meeting also aimed at preparing an "initiative report" from the Parliament. This report should raise the attention of the European Commission and the Council to the major threats to tuna due to market liberalization.

The European tuna industry is deeply concerned with the EU's decision to open a tariff quota for canned tuna. They claim that this decision will not only harm competitiveness, which is already at a minimum level due to high production costs, but it will also lead to further requests for tariff quotas from other third countries. Industry representatives, mainly from Spain, Italy and France also expressed their concern on the increasing competition from third countries. They contested the fact that "Non Dolphin Safe" tuna, banned in the U.S., can enter the EU market. They asked for a coherent European policy that would link conservation to trade, production to processing. A European ban on "Non Dolphin Safe" tuna would be the response to that concern.

The upcoming WTO meeting in Cancun is also seen as a major threat to the tuna sector if market liberalization for fish and fish products is confirmed. The "modalities paper" drafted by the Chairman of the Non-Agricultural Market Access negotiating group proposes the progressive elimination of all tariffs for some commodities, including fish and fish products, and is feared to destroy the entire European tuna industry. Some speakers noted contradictions regarding the objectives of WTO negotiations. How can the development of

developing countries be facilitated while imposing market liberalization that will negatively affect their fragile economies? The European tuna industry fears that all investments made in ACP countries and countries benefiting from special arrangements under the Generalized System of Preferences will be lost.

**Source(s):** European Commission, NOAA / Stephane Vrignaud (text Fisheries Committee Meeting)

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